



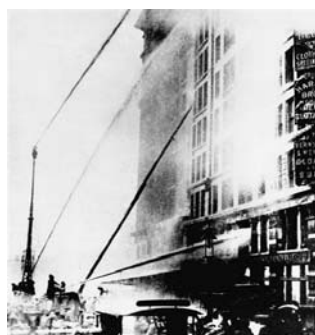
A hundred years ago the deadliest industrial disaster in the history of New York City occurred when a fire broke out at the Triangle Waist Company. The fire was the fourth highest loss of life from an industrial accident in U.S. history.

In 1911 The Triangle Waist Company was one of the biggest garment factories in New York. It made women's shirts, "shirtwaists," as they were called. Young women, mostly immigrants, worked at the factory. The workers were packed tightly together, surrounded by piles of cotton fabric, and paper patterns and lots of many other flammable things.



The fire was thought to have been started by a cigarette butt in a scrap bin on the eighth floor. When the piles of cotton caught fire, it spread rapidly burning through three floors in 18 minutes.

Terrified employees tried to escape the building. Many of the workers could not escape because the doors to the stairwells and exits had been locked.



Some crowded onto the poorly anchored, flimsy fire escape which twisted and collapsed from the heat and overload, spilling victims nearly 100 feet to their deaths on the concrete pavement below. Many others fell or jumped to their deaths from the eighth, ninth, and tenth floors. A large crowd of bystanders gathered on the street witnessing sixty-two people jumping or falling to their deaths.

Within 18 minutes 146 people were dead as a result of this fire. This eventually led to tougher work place safety rules in New York and nationwide.

### Why Noncombustible Buildings Can still Burn

The fire took place in a building which was considered "Fireproof". Although "fire-proof", the contents of each floor was far from being fire-proof. The materials and paper used to make the patterns were highly flammable, created lots of smoke, and burned very quickly. The chance of fires and spread of fires in the floors was very great and ever present. Soon after the fire and numerous investigations, codes were passed that required factory doors to remain open and unlocked during hours of operation.

